



May Day Committee's Demonstration, 1968.

A New Power Elite

Men are essentially good not bad. Split into warring camps, divided and poisoned by propaganda, they still yearn to be brothers. Anarchists have always believed this—it is at the centre of their whole philosophy. Those who maintain that men are essentially bad turn either to the Church or to the various parties of State Socialism or State Communism. Both the one and the other maintain that people need Authority—a State—to compel them to act 'for their own good' or for the 'good of society'. But what these authoritarians really have in mind is the continuation of their own very comfortable lives based as they are on the slavery of the majority of mankind.

Tolstoy saw through this more than seventy years ago. 'The well-to-do classes', he wrote, 'always have in view only such improvements as will not do away with the system of factory production and those conveniences of which they avail themselves. . . . The Socialists who demand the complete control of the means of production for the workers—expect production of the same or almost the same articles as are produced now to continue in the present or similar factories with the present division of labour. . . . the difference, as they imagine it, will be that all men will make use of such conveniences as they alone now enjoy. They dimly picture to themselves that, with the communalisation of the means of production they, too, will do some work—but chiefly as managers, designers, scientists or artists.' In other words, they will remain on top and in power, there will be no real equality. The workers will remain workers—even though they will somehow 'own' the factories!

Such people want a State and compulsion because they have no faith in humanity. Anarchists have always rejected this repugnant idea—and life is teaching that anarchists are right. Centuries of class rule and State control have brought us to our present plight—more of the same will end us for good.

No Need To Despair

Anarchists believe that free men, living without compulsion, may prefer fresh air to city life, hay making to car making, craftsmanship to mass production, and certainly, co-operation and mutual aid to competition and the rat race. They have always believed that once remove the physical shackles of compulsion and the spiritual shackles of the profit motive, and society will slow down. Tensions will disappear, people will respect one another and all will find time to stand and stare—and that, as every honest ecologist will tell you, is what the world needs today if it is to avert the coming catastrophe.

It is freedom and anarchy which today is being vindicated by life—it is compulsion, competition and inequality that stand condemned as the chief enemies of mankind.

There is no need to despair, freedom is on the move again because life demands it. The students and workers of Paris, only three years ago, shook French society to its foundations with their reassertion of the brotherhood of man and their rejection of the values of this rotten, capitalist society. They were, I am convinced, but the fore-runners of a movement which is going to sweep the whole world. The real spirit of May Day will then be reborn, and the old slogan of the French Revolution, never bettered and never yet

realised, will sound again: Liberty! Equality! Fraternity!

JOHN LAWRENCE;

The above article was first published in FREEDOM on 1 May 1971. It has been slightly altered to bring it up to date.
Eds.

IN BRIEF

JACK Jones, general secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union, led a march of a thousand transport workers and members of amenity groups to Parliament to lobby MPs for better support of public transport. The campaign, "Save our Services" had previously held a rally in Central Hall where the government had been attacked for cutting subsidies and raising fares.

Mr Jones was concerned about people being "able to afford to travel where their labour is most needed." No doubt Mr Jones' first consideration is work. As a trade union leader he has a vested interest in others being able to work and, of course, being able to get there. But he did also say that fare rises had been an important part of the rise in the cost of living and that these increases could only mean fewer services, misery to people who rely on public transport and the ultimate destruction of the public transport system.

All this is pretty obvious, but what is Mr Jones prepared to do to stop this and indeed, reverse the situation? Marches and lobbies of MPs have done little or nothing but there should be enough scope for the leader of the union in which all of London's busmen are organised. Could we suggest a union campaign for non-collection of fares?

Stirner

The following letter is a reply to a criticism which appeared in *Freedom* on 19 February 1977 (vol. 38 no. 3).

Francis Ellingham, in his comments on John Brent's review of my book *Max Stirner's Egoism*, attempts to show that Brent and I fail to understand Stirner. This, he thinks, lends support to Stirner's grandiose pronouncement that "the moral man can never understand the egoist." What his comments in fact point to is an altogether different conclusion: that the egoist can, apparently, never understand the arguments of "the moral man" (i.e. the critic of egoism).

According to Ellingham, I "dogmatically" hold that Stirner "advocates a ruthless will to power, power over things, persons and, above all, oneself". His objection to this is that it indicates to him that I am unaware of Stirner's contention that "worldly goods ... must be put away as no longer valuable."

Interestingly enough, although he attacks me on the point Ellingham seems unaware of my discussion of Stirner's attitude toward these "worldly goods." I clearly show in the chapter on "Freedom and Ownness" that the kind of ownership that was of central importance to Stirner was self-ownership, and that he vehemently asserted that no attachment to any other kind of property must threaten self-possession. (Did Ellingham bother to read that far?) But Stirner's position here is far from an assertion that the ego should not seek power over things (or other persons), since self-possession will obviously entail no contradiction with other kinds of ownership. Of course I recognize that Stirner held that if such a conflict should arise, "ownness" would call for the ego to shun material possession (or personal attachments), as the quote regarding "worldly goods" indicates. (I discuss this at some length in my analysis of Stirner's "stoicism", pp. 66-68).

Ellingham's error is that he misrepresents Stirner's attitude toward the world. His citation of Stirner shows the latter's view of the relative value of the world and the ego, but it does not adequately indicate his conception of the relation between the two (these are separate issues). As I state in the allegedly offending quote, Stirner saw the world as a field on which the ego could exercise its will to power. I could present abundant evidence for this from Stirner, but since I've already done it in the book I'll give but one example: "Where the world comes in my way - and it comes in my way everywhere - I consume it to quiet the hunger of my egoism." (296). It is on the basis of such statements that I attribute to Stirner an instrumentalist, exploitative view of the world.

I think that Ellingham is also incorrect in his criticism of Brent. I see no inconsistency in egoists banding together to maintain or increase their power, as Stirner in fact advises them to do. Ellingham misrepresents Brent's argument against Stirner when he changes the assertion that egoists could consistently combine to remain "on top" to an argument that egoists see "remaining on

top" as a good in itself, rather than a means toward egoistic enjoyment. The latter argument can be found neither in my book nor in Brent's review. Apparently Ellingham is so "possessed" by his "fixed idea" that non-egoists can't understand the egoist view of self-ownership that he has become incapable of dealing with the actual criticisms that they make.



The fundamental problem with egoists from Stirner to the present is that they fail to deal critically with the problem of the nature of the self. They accept as a given the ego as presented to them by the ideology of bourgeois individualism. Beyond this they can criticise everything, but the ego is sacred. As a result the egoist is ultimately a self-denying person, because of the narrow, false, impoverished self which is taken for the supreme reality. Denying that aspect of society which is within the self, and that aspect of the self which is in society, it is not surprising that an egoist like Stirner can conclude that the ego is a "nothing" (albeit a "creative nothing").

I agree that we should read Stirner in part for his passionate rebellion against the social institutions that crush individuality and restrict human creative development. But I think that an even greater significance of Stirner's thought is that it is the reductio ad absurdum of the alienated subjectivity of modern society. It is one of the numerous blind alleys into which bourgeois individualism necessarily leads. Although it is a highly ingenious act of rebellion, it is ultimately an attempt to escape from the prison by finding another cell.

John Clark

New Orleans

"Some Of Our Best Friends"

Dear Freedom,

I feel that I must reply to the many points raised by Jack Robinson (April 16) on the Lib-Lab pact. Firstly, direct taxation has failed to redistribute wealth from rich to poor since 1958, and it does not take account of the large fringe benefits enjoyed by the wealthy. Indirect taxation helps the poor as there is no VAT on essentials, such as food, and they spend a greater percentage of their income on these types of goods. Liberal Party policy includes a wealth tax which will hit the increased savings of the rich due to a fall in income tax, whilst this increased saving will lower interest rates, making investment easier as well as helping house buyers.

Secondly, the article suggests it is more than a coincidence that the petrol tax would hit country (Liberal) areas

worst. As many of these areas only enjoy bus services once or twice a day or less, surely Liberal M. Ps are only representing the needs of their constituents. In these areas of sparse population a frequent public transport system would be even more wasteful of resources than the private car. Liberals in power in urban areas have been the most environmentally conscious of any party, and seen the solution to problems of urban transportation in the setting up of efficient public transport systems. In the Stechford bye-election we were the only party (bar the Trots) to fight on a consistent anti-racist platform which undoubtedly cost us many votes.

Finally, the article states that the pact was not democratically arrived at, "despite consultations with the Party district organisers". In fact, David Steel had full endorsement for a power-sharing agreement from the last National Conference and the monthly party council (an elected body). There is no way the party could be forced to support the pact if it did not want it, whilst Liberal M. Ps are required only to give the government support on a motion of no confidence.

Whilst the reforms that can be gained by parliamentary action are very limited, they include many issues that cannot wait for "the revolution". This is especially true of many social and institutional issues where Parliament is less constrained by the powerful interest groups. Furthermore, it provides a useful platform for many of our views, and at a community level it is amazing what a good constituency M. P. can do.

Yours sincerely,
Michael Trup

P. S. There is no chance of any profit being made anyway, so don't worry about giving money to the Liberal Party coffers if you buy my pamphlet *A Libertarian Perspective* (15p + 6½p post)

J. R. replies: Michael Trup has answered most of my arguments in party-political terms which are more Liberal than libertarian. Therefore we are not arguing from the same premise, and the Y. L. adoption of Bakunin is phoney.

Six Poems

Dear Friends,

I am in the process of compiling an anthology of poetry on the theme of ecology and conservation, with particular emphasis on the effects of the human race upon the environment. Poets interested in contributing should send a maximum of six poems (with SAE) to reach me by September 1977.

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